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SCHOOL OF MEDICINE
DEPARTMENT OF PATHOLOGY AND ONCOLOGY

April 6, 1969

Mr. Dick Bernabei
Department of Classics
Queen's University
Kingston, Ontario

Dear Dick:

Your idea is correct!!! Yesterday I dented some live Italian ammunition and after firing the dents were obscured. Tomorrow I will dent some authentic W C C ammunition, photograph the cases, fire and then re-photograph them. Just as soon as the photographs are ready I will send them to you.

On many occasions I have attempted "dry runs" with empty cases. As you know the Mannlicher-Carcano is a "clip fed" weapon and the feeding mechanism is very poor. The bases of empty cases, on all of the eight weapons I have used, just simply will not feed into the bolt face and be carried forward into the chamber. In the very rare event when this does happen the lip, or rim, of the brass cartridge strikes something and is damaged. To seat an empty or a single live round it is necessary to withdraw the bolt completely and set the gun aside. With both hands the base of the cartridge is slipped up into the bolt face. The bolt with its load can then be [illegible] into the gun. [illegible] round with its tapering wedge bullet end will feed into the chamber. However, the blunt and sharp rim of the empty brass case always strikes something and a little force on the bolt will damage the lip or rim of the empty case. To seat the empty case case it must be guided with the finger, after the base is first inserted into the bolt face, until the sharp edges have passed into the chamber and the bolt considerably forward. It is impossible to drop a live or empty round into the chamber and then close the bolt.

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Your idea about the origin of the nicks on the cases found in the TSBD is good. However, live ammunition and empty cases placed in the chamber of the two guns I now have, and the bolts closed, do not emerge with nicks or dents similar to those found on the ammunition attributed to Mr. Oswald. Perhaps Mr. Oswald's gun will do this to the exclusion of others. I will try the experiment on four of the other guns which I have given to friends. An attempt will also be made to amend my suit against the government to include Mr. Oswald's gun C 2766 and if successful I will try the experiment on his gun.

I'll instruct Nichols also to get evidence cases and test cases for microscopic comparison.

Dick, this is very important data. Might it not be best to keep it confidential for a little while yet? I am writing a book on the problem and will want to include it in the book. Also Look Magazine has indicated willingness to carry a short article by myself. I read your recent communications to indicate you will also be shortly writing on the subject. Might it not be appropriate for us to write a short note on this point with yourself as senior author and try to sell it to an appropriate magazine and the magazine or ourself have a press release about the time of publication?

Tomorrow I will wire the Archivist and attempt to have him make special pictures for us to show these dents somewhat after the fashion the originals are shown in Mr. Thompson's book.

What do you think of this? I want to write the basic report on the dents, but I would like Nichols and you in on it. Presuming Nichols can work out a publication deal with LOOK, can we do this: 1) Bernabei — basic report on cause and significance of dents.
2) Nichols — physical tests, photographs, and appendix on results of tests
3) Weisberg — other matters related to the rifle ammo; i.e. questions which this new data raises. Something on the bearing of this material on other matters.

Shall look forward to hearing from you, Sincerely,

John Nichols